

GOLD RUSH! GOLD RUSH!

by Jean Rogers



The special ed teacher looked harried. This was her first full year of teaching. She held only a provisional license, and, in addition to teaching and taking care of her family (a husband and two elementary-school children), she was taking classes two nights a week at a state university, 45 minutes away, to earn her certification.

"I just need a few more articles," she explained in a voice that hinted of desperation. "My paper is due tomorrow." Here in the library, the staff was desperate as well. The school day had ended. We were in the middle of setting up the coaches' hospitality room for an Academic Super Bowl meet. Seventy-one hungry mouths would be arriving within the hour.

"Have you used INSPIRE yet?" I asked.

"What's that?" She looked puzzled.

"This is a gold mine. Just log on. There's a link from our home page," I explained. She typed away as we arranged trays of food. The teacher soon was holding the full-text copies she needed. She had found the mother lode.

"Wow! I'm thrilled," she blurted. So were we. We managed to fill her request and have the spread ready for the coaches on time. The rest is history. A new, dedicated INSPIRE user.

A few days later, the athletic director came to see us. A smart fellow, he is our reference source for all sorts of sports info. "I'm applying for a grant. I need to read all of these articles for background." He showed us a bibliography of at least 12 items. "Can you round them up for me?"

"Well," I replied, "I think we can find all of these on INSPIRE. Sit down, please. I'll show you how to use it." Another convert. In truth, we ended up finding all the articles *for* him. It was early March and the middle of Indiana basketball tourney time. We all know how *that* is. Still the process turned out to be brief, and he was

impressed to have some rather obscure periodicals so readily available.

We *all* love INSPIRE at Western . . . students from all grades, at all levels of research . . . staff preparing lessons or studying for a college class. Those doing historical reports involving people are enthusiastic about the *Biography Resource Center*. A cook in the school kitchen studies articles on brain damage after her daughter was badly injured in an automobile accident. One student is excited to find an informative piece on Mark Cuban, Indiana University graduate and millionaire owner of the Dallas Mavericks basketball team. Another is happy to find factual gems on Jason Kidd of the New Jersey Nets or presidents from George Washington to George Bush (both of them). Using the periodical databases, a student in an advanced British literature class finds helpful an article treating Churchill's speaking ability and use of metaphor.

We value the feature in the databases where the user can isolate a single periodical title. Invariably, anxious students with incomplete citations will rush in when the *Works Cited* page is due. They type in an author's name or part of a title. Amazement breaks across their faces to see the needed nuggets magically appear with INSPIRE.

We tell our students and staff members that INSPIRE is a gold mine, and mine it, they do. The middle school students can find the rich ore of articles geared to their level. So can the elementary students. On the other hand, high-level journal articles or research pieces from such databases as the Educational Research Information Center (ERIC) are as precious as chunks of gold. Detailed health and pharmaceutical information can be excavated. The INSPIRE user can dig out articles from newspapers exclusively. Spanish speakers can seek the *oro* using the *¡Informé!* section. No pyrite in INSPIRE.

A gold mine indeed! INSPIRE is worth its weight in gold. The state legislature has staked a valuable claim for the residents of Indiana!

about the author

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